

Thunderhorse Battalion Newsletter

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<http://thunderhorse2-12.com>

25 Dec 2004

Merry Christmas!

I expect most of you are already up and opening presents by now as it's about 1730 (5:30 PM) here in Iraq. We have had a quiet and peaceful Christmas day here in Task Force 2-12. The Christmas celebration began last night here on Camp Striker with several different church services and then a candlelight memorial ceremony at the dining facility that honored all of the fallen soldiers from 1st Cavalry Division. As the narrator called out the roll of those we've lost out name by name, a soldier placed an ornament on the Christmas tree the missing soldier's name on it. There were nine ornaments for soldiers from 2-12 CAV, including our two fallen Estonians. I have enclosed a photo of the tree. It was a sobering event and a fitting tribute to those who won't ever get to come home for Christmas again. We did brighten the atmosphere up following the ceremony by singing of Christmas carols. It was a very nice evening and a job well done by the 15th Forward Support Battalion, the host of the event.

Later, as I checked the tents around midnight, I found most soldiers watching movies in their tents or competing in some sort of electronic games. I don't think there were visions of sugar plums were dancing in their heads but it was quiet as a mouse. This morning most folks slept in until 0900 or even 1000 hours—except for old guys like the two Sergeant Majors and me who were up early as usual. Since we don't have an assigned sector right now, I was able to give everyone the 24th, 25th, and the 26th off. This allowed everyone to rest, relax and enjoy the day. Chaplain Jim Combs and Command Sergeant Major Booker set up the tent we use for meetings and made it quite festive. They put up the tree we bought and surrounded it with a variety of items sent to us from a host of great family and friends back home. The items varied from baked goods, to batteries, to socks, to games and everything in between. The soldiers were then encouraged to come in and help themselves to the gifts. Many took some, but there is still a lot left. We have all received so much in the last few weeks we don't know what to do with it. Our challenge lies in carrying it with us when we move out of here in the future. Tomorrow, we will have a task force sports day and a barbeque. The highlight of the day will be the lieutenants versus the captains and above football game. I smell a victory coming for my team, I just hope there are no broken bones before we get back into the fight again.



Of course I can't tell you when or where we are moving, but I can tell you that the move is the last big step before we start to head to Kuwait in about seven weeks. Our new home in the interim will be a bit more austere than what we've grown accustomed to over here but certainly no worse than we normally live in the field. We will have some access to the Internet and very limited phone coverage that will improve as we go along. Our new area will have its threats but it will be nowhere near as bad as our old sector in Abu Ghuraib. This move and our presence will serve to continue to keep the enemy off balance and to deny him sanctuary. All of this will contribute to our overall efforts to maintain security for the elections on 30 January.

In closing, I want to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Your support and unwavering enthusiasm has helped us to make it through one of the most challenging years in all of our lives. We have to maintain our commitment to the mission over here; I firmly believe that this is the right thing to do and that our sacrifices will bear fruit down the road in time. I know this belief doesn't make it any easier to spend the holidays away from loved-ones and I truly appreciate the efforts all of you have made to ease the burden. God bless and take care.

Always Ready! Thunderhorse!

LTC Tim Ryan
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